DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 270 816 CS 209 919

AUTHOR Duke, Charles R.
TITLE Effective Inservice: What Does It Take?
PUB DATE Mar 86
NOTE 17p.; Paper presented at the Annual Meeting of the National Council of Teachers of English Spring Conference (5th, Phoenix, AZ, March 20-22, 1986).
PUB TYPE Reports - Descriptive (141) -- Speeches/Conference Papers (150)

EDRS PRICE MF01/PC01 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS Computer Assisted Instruction; Elementary Secondary Education; *Inservice Teacher Education; *Models; *Program Design; Teacher Administrator Relationship; Teacher Workshops; *Writing Instruction
IDENTIFIERS Kentucky (Fort Thomas)

ABSTRACT

The use of a model of an effective inservice program developed in Fort Thomas, Kentucky, revealed that in order to provide better inservice programs for experienced teachers, the programs should be an assessment of the needs and professional concerns of the teachers as directly expressed by them. Those developing the program should insist on collaboration among all participants in organizing and planning. The focus of the program should be on specifics that may be translated successfully into practice. Inservice should be designed so that it reflects the developmental stages of the teachers involved. For instance, beginning and developing teachers are willing to accept information and advice from authorities, but experienced teachers usually see little need for outside "experts" and would prefer to set up and carry out their own inservice programs. Effective inservice programs will provide opportunities for teachers to reflect and to discuss the merits of what they do and will encourage the establishment of a peer support system that will carry forward the benefits of the inservice. (A detailed schedule of a two-week writing workshop for teachers and students, which was used in the Ft. Thomas inservice program, is included.) (SRT)

****
* Reproductions supplied by EDRS are the best that can be made *
* from the original document. *
****

ED270816

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
Office of Educational Research and Improvement
EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)

X This document has been reproduced as received from the person or organization originating it.

☐ Minor changes have been made to improve reproduction quality.

• Points of view or opinions stated in this document do not necessarily represent official OERI position or policy.

EFFECTIVE INSERVICE: WHAT DOES IT TAKE?

CHARLES R. DUKE

"PERMISSION TO REPRODUCE THIS MATERIAL HAS BEEN GRANTED BY

Charles R. Duke

TO THE EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)."

CS 209 919

EFFECTIVE INSERVICE: WHAT DOES IT TAKE?

We've all seen the scene, maybe even been participants in it--the annual review of what inservice has been planned for the coming year. Usually the review comes at the big faculty meeting prior to the opening of school when the superintendent, principal and curriculum coordinator all do their best to whip up enthusiasm for the year's inservice program. The undercurrent of faculty critiques sweeps through the room:

> "Another Madeline Hunter series--I can cite that woman in my sleep."
>
> "Oh, must be expecting drug problems again--we've got two sessions on dealing with controlled substances."
>
> "Hey, here's one that should keep us awake--wellness and the burned out teacher."
>
> "Why don't they ever ask us what we need or want to do with inservice time? We could offer some good ways to use our time that would benefit the kids and ourselves."

Why, indeed. Although a number of school districts do try to involve teachers in planning inservice, many others do not. Missing from many inservice programs is the basic understanding that adults learn differently from students, yet, like students, they too, learn in ways which, according to Siedow (1985), are "parallel to their age and developmental levels." Yarger and Mertens (1980), for example, suggest that as teachers move through six stages of development, experiences in each of those stages contribute to their professional knowledge and skills. See Figure 1.

Figure 1

Stage 1: pre-teacher education student

Stage 2: teacher education student

Stage 3: beginning teacher (0-1 year of experience)

Stage 4: developing teacher (1-3 years of experience)

Stage 5: practicing teacher (3-8 years of experience)

Stage 6: experienced teacher (8 years or more)

Teachers in the final four stages tend to exhibit certain behaviors which have implications for inservice. In Stages 3 and 4, teachers, still neophytes in the field, look for "things that work" and are willing to accept information and advice from their preservice authorities. Typically, these teachers want to know the "best" or the "right" way to conduct their instruction in the classroom (Bents and Howey, 1981). Teachers who have reached Stage 5 tend to show more confidence in their own abilities, their content knowledge has increased, and they are more aware of themselves as professionals. Most often these individuals want to explore several alternatives in approaching a teaching situation and want to broaden their horizons as professionals. In the last group, the experienced teachers, we may find hints of complacency but also a desire to reflect and share experiences with other teachers in this category. Frequently these individuals see little need for outside "experts" and would prefer to set up and carry out their own inservice program, often independent of any other district efforts (Yarger and Mertens, 1980).

Scheduling certain types of experiences for those in stages 3 and 4 and other experiences for those in stages 5 and 6 makes good sense. Unfortunately, teachers in stages 5 and 6 rarely get the opportunities for

inservice that reflect their needs at this point in their careers even though Berman and McLaughlin (1978) and Lawrence (1974) clearly show that successful inservice most often comes from training that focuses upon participants' individual needs.

Putting together an inservice experience for teachers in the last two stages of development need not be a difficult undertaking, since it will tend to reflect the components of most effective inservice; the key difference is the role which teachers take in the planning and carrying out of the inservice. The process for developing these inservice experiences can be demonstrated by using a model developed in the Ft. Thomas, Kentucky, school system.

Assessing Needs

All successful inservice planning begins with a needs assessment (Wood, Thompson and Russell, 1981). Although the usual procedure is to send out surveys, construct checklists and then compile a list of topics from the results, the ideal assessment is the one done by the participants themselves. They perceive a need and communicate it to the appropriate authorities. In the case of faculty within the Ft. Thomas schools, they perceived a need to move beyond the knowledge they had accumulated since their participation in a summer institute conducted by the West Kentucky Writing Project, a part of the National Writing Project network. A number of teachers, therefore, approached the school administration and requested that a special inservice experience be developed that would meet their special needs in the teaching of writing.

Establishing Objectives

The Ft. Thomas teachers had used what they had learned in the summer writing institute for sufficient time--in most cases at least one or two years--to discover that they needed more time to refine their teaching skills in the area of writing. Of particular interest to them was a more thorough understanding of how the writing process works with students of different ages and abilities and a desire for more knowledge about setting up and carrying through writing experiences with students. These concerns quickly surfaced among the teachers requesting the inservice because the teachers knew each other and had worked with each other in the writing institute. In all cases, though, these teachers were either practicing or experienced teachers who had moved beyond the inservice experiences being planned for the younger or less experienced faculty. As a group, they reached consensus quickly on what the inservice experience they envisioned should do for them.

Planning Content

David Memory (1985) suggests that four features should govern the choice of instructional strategies for new content: relevance and potential effectiveness for the classrooms of the participants; (2) ease of learning by teachers; (3) ease of adaptation into normal teaching approaches; (4) the likelihood of having a quick positive influence in classrooms. If early sessions address these features, later sessions can call for more reflection and greater potential for long term change. Since the Kentucky teachers already had experienced the effects from the new content they had received in writing instruction, their interests had to be met in a way that promoted reflection, sharing, and long term commitment for change in their classrooms (Siedow, 1985). These teachers indicated

that they wanted time to develop completely new teaching applications and to field test them before taking them back to their classrooms; they wanted time to examine student writing in more depth and to refine their own skills in evaluating student writing and in conferencing with students about writing. In addition, they expressed a curiosity about seeing how other teachers taught writing at different grade levels. The use of computers in stimulating writing intrigued them as well, especially since none of the teachers had any basic knowledge themselves about using computers for generating writing. Finally, the teachers expressed an interest in doing some professional reading in the field of composition, something that their previous summer institute experience had not addressed sufficiently.

Selecting Presentation Methods and Staffing

Anyone planning inservice programs has come to realize that for successful inservice, teachers have to be involved. "Talking heads" rarely work with teachers at any stage of development. Instead, demonstration of strategies followed by opportunities for practice and feedback seem to bring the highest degree of involvement and the greatest impact. Through such experience, participants come to see the strategies and/or content as being relevant and useful; they also gain confidence in their own abilities to implement the strategies or introduce the content in their own classrooms.

Zirkel and Albert (1979) found that teachers tend to prefer workshop settings to conferences, particularly if incentives in the terms of credits or stipends are involved; teachers want more emphasis on instructional strategies and less on teaching philosophy; and they respond better to demonstrations and presentations than to regular academic courses. Reflecting on these preferences and seeking a way to meet the somewhat

complex combination of needs expressed by the Kentucky teachers, the district set aside two weeks during the summer for a special inservice experience. A limited number of teachers and students would come together to work on writing; teachers would meet for one week by themselves and then would work with students the second week. With that general format in mind, the district requested that the director of the West Kentucky Writing Project work with the interested teachers in designing the experience so it would have clear benefits for both populations.

A call went out for interested teachers to sign up for the experience, and parents received notification that their children could apply for the one week student writing workshop. Sixty children and eight teachers applied for the workshop. All eight teachers were accepted and 30 students from grades 1-11 were selected on a random basis from the sixty applicants. Teachers received a $200 stipend from the district and students were not charged a fee for the workshop.

Upon acceptance, the teachers discussed with the director how they would like to see their first week structured. They saw several basic purposes in the first week's activities: meeting their own needs in terms of developing more background in the field of writing, becoming familiar with word processing sufficiently to generate acceptable text, and developing plans for the second week of the workshop with the students. Ultimately the teachers settled upon the following schedule for the first week:

Day 1: A Review of What Has Worked for Us and What Has Not
Expectations and a Plan of Organization for the Student Workshop
Dividing the Tasks of Planning and Implementation
An Introduction to Word Processing

******

Day 2: Conferencing with Students--Problems and Refinements

How Others Teach Writing (viewing of selected video-tapes of classroom teachers)

Discussion of Ideas for the Student Workshop

Research time--computer practice, small group work

******

Day 3: Looking at Errors in Student Writing--Patterns and Implications

How Others Teach Writing (viewing of selected videotapes of classroom teachers)

Team Planning Time for Student Workshop

Research time--reading, writing, computer practice

******

Day 4: Selected Problems in Teaching Writing

Refining Plans for the Student Workshop

******

Day 5: Review of Plans for Student Workshop

Materials Development

Setting up the Student Workshop Environment

During this first week, the teachers by consensus decided upon a curriculum focus for the student workshop. It would start with exploring various uses of language play, then move to applications of language and finally to the use of language in communication. The teachers believed this orientation would permit them to try a number of new teaching activities while also enabling them to study how students at different age and ability levels responded to the writing process. The teachers decided

to work in pairs, matching themselves with teachers from grade levels different from their own. They then grouped the students so that each team would be able to work with a different grade level combination each day:

Group 1: Grades 2-4 = 8 students

Group 2: Grades 5-6 = 8 students

Group 3: Grade 7 = 8 students

Group 4: Grades 8-11 = 6 students

The final sequence of activities for the second week with the students can be seen in Figure 2 below.

INSERT FIGURE 2 HERE

Some special successes appeared during the second week of the workshop which might not have happened had not the teachers been the ones planning the entire experience. As a result of their own explorations of how to produce text on the computers, the teachers decided to experiment with the students, most of whom had not worked on computers before. With access to four Apple computers and two printers, the teachers arranged their work with the students so that all 30 had at least two fairly prolonged experiences with the computer; as a result, second graders produced simple sentence expansion exercises while third and fourth graders produced short poems and stories--all were student generated without benefit of specific assignments. All of the other students used the computer to produce rough drafts and some became proficient enough to edit on the computer. The quickness with which students adjusted to writing on the computer and the growth in text length and quality amazed teachers and quickly alerted them to a potential composing process they had not considered for students.

Another success which came from teacher collaboration was the creation of Ace, the Word King, AWK for short. The teachers, concerned because much of their work was activity centered and not always designed for a specific audience, wanted the students to develop a sense of how important audience could become in writing. As a result, Ace appeared in the form of a letter to each student on the second day of the student workshop. Ace was portrayed as a writer who happened to be passing through the area. Though he could not attend the workshop, he did have some time to write letters if the students were willing to write him. Each day, letters from Ace would be delivered to each student in the workshop; they, in turn, would compose their own replies which would be delivered to Ace at the end of the day. The amount and quality of writing, not to mention the intense interest this activity generated, amazed the teachers and taught them something about the value of audience in the classroom. In fact, students refused to start the day's other activities until they had written their letters, an activity that grew in length each day until it was taking 45 minutes to an hour. During this time, students rarely asked for any help and did not submit their letters to the teachers for critique. The letters went into sealed envelopes addressed to Ace. Again, teachers learned about the importance of commitment to writing, a principle they knew something about but which never had been demonstrated so graphically before.

Evaluating Inservice Effectiveness

The last day of the workshop, the teachers and students sat down for a sharing of ideas and impressions. Students uniformly requested that the experience be continued another year and insisted that they were going to tell their regular teachers about many of the activities the workshop had provided. The teachers, in turn, were amazed at their own abilities,

particularly in terms of teaching writing at grade levels where none of them had had any prior experience. The team approach helped immensely in building confidence and the collaborative planning and sharing which went on each afternoon after the students had gone home at noon turned out to be one of the most beneficial experiences. In fact, teachers expressed a determination to do more collaborative planning, sharing, and teaching in the future. In addition, each teacher took away from the workshop an extensive catalog of teaching applications for various grade levels; the students took home an anthology of their own writing to share with parents.

Follow-up Assistance

Even though follow-up is a critical element in the success of an inservice model, the assistance frequently gets overlooked (Bristow, 1985). In most models, the objectives rarely are met completely during the inservice, so the follow-up becomes important for implementation. In this case, however, the follow-up appeared in the content of the model itself, providing teachers with immediate opportunities to try out strategies and then to share with each other the results of their efforts. Building this component directly into the model sets a precedent for teachers when they return to their respective classrooms; in essence, a support system emerges as the teachers, having found the value of sharing and collaborating, find they want to continue the system during the regular year.

The Final Characteristics

The next time we plan inservice and we want to avoid as much as possible undercurrents of dissatisfaction, particularly among experienced faculty, we can find it useful to emulate the characteristics of the model portrayed in this discussion:

A. Base the inservice experience on assessment of the needs and professional concerns expressed directly by the teachers involved.

B. Insist on collaboration among all participants in organizing and planning.

C. Focus on specifics that may be translated successfully into practice.

D. Design inservice to reflect the developmental stages of the teachers involved; involve teachers as adults responsible for their own learning.

E. Provide opportunities for teachers to reflect and to discuss the merits of what they do.

F. Encourage the establishment of a peer support system which will carry forward the benefits of the inservice.

References

Bents, R.H. & Howey, K.R. (1981). Staff development-change in the individual. In Dillon-Peterson (Ed.), Staff development/organization development. Alexandria, VA. Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development.

Berman, P. & McLaughlin, M.W. (1978). Federal programs supporting educational change, Volume 7: Implementing and sustaining innovations. Santa Monica, CA. Rand Corporation (Ed. 159 289).

Bristow, P.S. (1985). Providing follow-up assistance. In M. D. Siedow, D.M. Memory and P.S. Bristow. Inservice education for content area teachers. Newark, DE. International Reading Association.

Lawrence, G. (1974). Patterns of effective inservice education: a state of the art summary of research on materials and procedures for changing teacher behaviors in inservice education. Tallahassee, FL. Florida State Department of Education (Ed. 176 424).

Memory, D. M. (1985). Planning Content. In M.D. Siedow, D.M. Memory & P.S. Bristow. Inservice education for content area teachers. Newark, DE. International Reading Association.

Siedow, M.D. (1985). Selecting presentation methods and staffing. In M.D. Siedow, D. Memory and P.S. Bristow. Inservice education for content area teachers. Newark, DE. International Reading Association.

Wood, F.H., Thompson, S.R. & Russell, Sr. F. (1981). Designing effective staff development programs. In B. Dillon-Peterson (Ed.), Staff development/organization development. Alexandria, VA. Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development.

Yarger, S.J. & Mertens, S.K. (1980). Testing the waters of school based teacher education. In Corrigan and Howey (Eds.), Concepts to guide the teaching of teachers. Reston, VA. Council for Exceptional Children.

Zirkel, P.A. & Albert. V.F. (1979). Assessing teachers' preference regarding inservice education, The Clearinghouse, 52, 328-333.

Figure 2
Workshop Schedule

	GRADES 2-4	GRADES 5-6	GRADE 7	GRADES 8-11
Day 1	PLAYING WITH WORDS	PLAY ON WORDS	USING WORDS	PLAYING WITH WORDS
Morning	Oral Reading: CAT IN THE HAT--built rhyme lists on board; then wrote short passages with rhyme Building Images--self portraits; sentence describing action; use word processor to expand sentences; finish drawing and illustrative sentence. Sharing and bulletin board display of product	Series of word games: Noun switch; progressive clues; streamlined ghost; ads; choral reading using color association; alphabet soup; dictionary sentences	Ice Breaker: Use of illustrated writing folders Word Webbing Listening/ Describing Activity Classifying Activity Creating word puzzles--computer Personal experience piece--computer and typewriters	Relating language to the individual; name cinquain Word Webbing Writing from the Web Brand Names Bumper Stickers Comic Strip Dialogue
Afternoon	Team evaluation and planning			
Day 2	BUILDING IDEAS	MAKING USE OF WORDS	EXPANDING WORD USE	COMMUNICATING WITH WORDS
	Answer Ace's Letter	Answer Ace's Letter	Answer Ace's Letter	Answer Ace's Letter
Morning	Expanding core sentences into short pieces; based on sentences describing themselves; use of questions to gain information. Collaborative sentence building. Color Writing Poems read from Shel Silverstein's WHERE THE SIDEWALK ENDS and O'Neill's HAILSTONES AND HALIBUT BONES; focused on sight words in sentences	Introducing Modes of Writing Highlighted use of narrative and the role of dialogue Introducing concept of leads Modeled prewriting strategies Students generated draft of choice (computers and typewriters used)	Expanding on sound words from previous day; sentence expansion; descriptive word exercise Introducing writing process and model; generate student pieces and encourage sharing	Talk as a means for developing writing: interviews; Introducing Writing Process Generate Draft Model Peer Conferencing and then practice
Afternoon	Team evaluation and planning			

Workshop Schedule (continued)

	GRADES 2-4	GRADES 5-6	GRADE 7	GRADES 8-11
Day 3	SEQUENCING EVENTS	CONFERENCING	WRITING PROCESS	WRITING PROCESS
	Answer Ace's Letter	Answer Ace's Letter	Answer Ace's Letter	Answer Ace's Letter
Morning	Return to color stories and cont. work Practice sequence with story starters; oral story-telling Introduce revision Mini-skill lesson on focus, cut and paste; conferencing with each other	Model peer response process (two teachers used their own writing) Process: (1)locate conference spot with partner (2)author reads (3)partner listens (4)conf. partner retells piece (5)conf. partner asks questions (6)author responds (7)author decides what next step is to be (8)author wants to write more	Review process Discuss modes of writing; highlight narrative and use of dialogue Took new piece through process (computer and typewriters) Intro. conferencing techniques	Review process and generate new piece Review conferencing and practice with new drafts
Afternoon	Team evaluation and planning	Review leads and generate new ones		
Day 4	SELECTING FOR PUB	POLISHING FOR PUB	POLISHING FOR PUB	POLISHING FOR PUB
	Answer Ace's Letter	Answer Ace's Letter	Answer Ace's Letter	Answer Ace's Letter
Morning	Story endings--practice Put stories on word processors and print out Mini-lesson on simple editing: period, question mark, capitals	Model group conferencing using sample paper Re-emphasize leads, focus, and use of dialogue Editing practice Response group practice Editing conferences	Editing skills session Response groups Conferencing	Small group conf. Revising strat. Large group critiques
Afternoon	Team evaluation and planning			

Workshop Schedule (continued)

	GRADES 2-4	GRADES 5-6	GRADE 7	GRADES 8-11
Day 5	PUBLICATION	PUBLICATION	PUBLICATION	PUBLICATION
	Answer Ace's Letter	Answer Ace's Letter	Answer Ace's Letter	Answer Ace's Letter
Morning	Polishing and editing Read-around with other groups Evaluation/Awards	Polishing and editing Read-around with other groups Evaluation/Awards	Polishing and editing Read-around with other groups Evaluation/Awards	Polishing and editing Read-around with other groups Evaluation/Awards
Afternoon	Team evaluation and wrap-up			